



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE
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CHICAGO, IL 60604

NEWS RELEASE

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177 Become New U.S. Citizens in Patriotic Ceremony

(Chicago) In celebration of the 4th of July holiday, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), along with the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, held a special naturalization ceremony today for 177 of this country's newest American citizens. This event took place in the beautiful Winter Garden Room of the Harold Washington Library. The new citizens hailed from 41 different countries from around the globe, with Poland having the largest representation (22%), followed by Mexico (19%) and then India (10%).

Keynote speaker Antonio Mora, lead news anchor for CBS 2 and himself a naturalized citizen from Cuba, congratulated the new citizens. "It is indeed a pleasure for me to greet you, our nation's newest citizens, on what may be the most important day of your lives," said Mora. "I encourage you to embrace the freedoms and opportunities this country offers and to never take them for granted."

The Honorable Charles P. Kokoras, Chief Judge of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, administered the oath of allegiance to all 177 citizens, many of whom were flanked by family members proudly waving American flags. One of the new citizens, George Dante Pineda from the Philippines, sang beautiful renditions of the national anthem, "America the Beautiful" and "God Bless America," accompanied by the St. Thomas the Apostle Choir of Naperville.

"Our country's greatness is deeply rooted in our rich immigration tradition," said INS Assistant District Director Shirley Roberts. "Our country is grappling with great uncertainty now, and it is important for each of us to take time and reflect on what it means to be a citizen of this wonderful nation."

The INS has provided immigration benefits, including naturalization of new citizens, to Chicago's immigrants since July 1, 1897. Granting citizenship to eligible candidates is one of the

main priorities of the agency. Last year the Chicago INS office naturalized over 30,000 new citizens.

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